Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice

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CHAPTER 4

A Study of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā''s Epistle on Magic, the Longer Version (52b)

Liana Saif

Khitāmuhu misk. Wa-fī dhālika fa l-yatanāfas al-mutanāfisūn.

Its conclusion, musk. So for this, let the competitors compete.
Qur'an 83:26

∴

Magic is given a prestigious place in *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* ("The epistles of the Brethren of Purity"). It is the subject of the concluding epistle, wherein the principal themes of the entire encyclopedia are brought together—the vital powers of the cosmos and its emanationist scheme, salvation, the intelligibility of nature, and the compatibility of philosophy and revelation. Mastering this knowledge gives power to humans over nature and, most importantly, actualizes their potential for spiritual enlightenment, the ultimate magical act and the real goal of the sage.

Yet, this epistle is understudied. One finds little about it in Alessandro Bausani's monograph on the *Rasā'il*, in Ian Netton's *Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity*, or in the works of Abbas Hamdani and Carmela Baffioni, all of whom studied the *Rasā'il* in depth. It is also conspicuously overlooked by Manfred Ullmann in his *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam*.[1] Bausani explicitly dismisses it as irrele-

1 Alessandro Bausani, *L' enciclopedia dei Fratelli della Purità: Riassunto, con introduzione e breve commento dei 52 Trattati o Epistole degli Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā'* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1978), 279–281; Ian Richard Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 50–52; Manfred Ullmann, *Die Natur-und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), Ullmann mentions the epistle as a source on the lunar mansion, see 351–353; he mentions them in passing also at 338, 370; no substantial mention is found in Abbas Hamdani, "The

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vant.[2] The epistle's subject matter, its asymmetrical structure, and its disorganized content may have been behind its exclusion, especially as it manifests in the uncritical yet widely available Bombay (1887–1889), Cairo (1928), and Beirut (1957) editions.[3]

Based on these uncritical editions, Yves Marquet pays much more attention to the epistle on magic. In *La philosophie des Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, he describes its astrological content, the juxtaposition of miracles and magic, the typology of magic, and its relevance to prophecy and sacral power.[4] In his *Les Frères de la Pureté, pythagoriciens de l'Islam*, he describes the content along lines similar to the aforementioned work, while trying to discern some structural logic by dividing the epistle into five sections interrupted by digressions and additions. His discussion of these sections and their authorship is, unfortunately, highly speculative.[5] In *La philosophie des alchimistes et l'alchimie des philosophes*, Marquet describes the Ikhwān's distinction between licit and illicit magic and reiterates the relationship between the occult sciences, prophecy, and sacral power. Furthermore, he discusses its alchemical content.[6] Marquet is interested mainly in the epistle on magic for its articulation of astrological doctrines and its references to the concepts of imamhood and caliphate, the primary theme of his doctoral dissertation that was later published as *La philosophie des Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*.[7]

Arrangement of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* and the Problem of Interpolation" (83–100), or Carmela Baffioni, "The Scope of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*" (101–122), both in *Epistles of The Brethren of Purity: The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and their Rasā'il: An Introduction*, ed. Nader el-Bizri (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008).

2 Bausani, *L' enciclopedia dei Fratelli Della Purità*, 12.

3 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 52a*, ed. and trans. Godefroid de Callataÿ and Bruno Halflants (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2011), 1–3; on the uncritical editions, see Ismail K. Poonawala, "Why We Need an Arabic Critical Edition with an Annotated English Translation of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*," in el-Bizri, *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and Their Rasā'il: An Introduction*, 33–57.

4 Yves Marquet, *La philosophie des Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (Dakar: Université de Dakar, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Departement d'Arabe, 1973), 138, 485–486, 486–489.

5 Yves Marquet, *Les "Frères de la Pureté," pythagoriciens de l'Islam* (Paris: S. E. H. A.—Edidit, 2006), 9–23; Daniel de Smet, "Yves Marquet, les Iḫwān al-Ṣafā' et le pythagorisme," *Journal Asiatique* 295 (2007): 491–500.

6 Yves Marquet, *La philosophie des alchimistes et l'alchimie des philosophes. Jâbir ibn Hayyân et les Frères de la Pureté* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1988), 18–23, 32–39.

7 Yves Marquet, "La détermination astrale de l'évolution selon les Frères de la Pureté," in

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The uncritical editions used in the aforementioned studies conflate what were shown by manuscript examination to be two independent versions of the epistle, which have become known as the shorter version (52a) and the longer version (52b).[8] A critical edition of 52a was published in 2011, edited and translated by Godefroid de Callataÿ and Bruno Halflants. In the introduction, Halflants treats the manuscript tradition of the epistle on magic, noting that "the short and the long versions of the epistle do not seem to be reducible to one common origin," which led to the publication of these versions separately. The introduction of the critical edition of 52a includes the first analysis of some of the Ikhwān's ideas on magic based on manuscripts, heralding a new stage in the study of this subject.[9]

This article focuses on the structure and content of the longer version, comparing them with those of 52a while arguing for the integrality of 52b to the entire encyclopedia. The Ikhwān's unique approach to magic in 52b will be analyzed. Some of 52b's themes taken up by Marquet and Lory, such as the typology of magic and its relation to prophecy and sacral power, will be revisited here and presented in a new light directed by manuscript evidence and by situating magic within the religio-philosophical enterprise of the Ikhwān and their *Rasāʾil* as a whole. Finally, the influence of the epistle, particularly 52b, on magic will be considered.

1 Concordance[10]

The Beirut edition places the two versions under one heading, *Fī māhiyyat al-siḥr wa-l-ʿazāʾim wa-l-ʿayn* ("On the quiddity of magic, conjurations and the [evil] eye"). The following table shows the variation of the title across the manuscripts available to the present author (Table 4.1):

"Sciences occultes et l'Islam," ed. Pierry Lory and Annick Regourd, special issue of *Bulletin d'études orientales* 44 (1992): 127–146.

8 *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2008), 283–312 (short version), 312–463 (long version); The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*.

9 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, 5.

10 For the long version of the epistle on magic, I refer to manuscripts that are outlined by Godefroid de Callataÿ's and Bruno Halflants's critical edition of the shorter version of the epistle on magic but rely mainly on Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, which is the oldest (sixth/twelfth century). It is checked against other manuscripts from their list, in addition to four others to which I had access: London, British Library, Or. 2359 (dated 27

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TABLE 4.1 Variation of the title across the manuscripts

Manuscript[11]	Title
Of 52a: The title in the 52a critical edition based on Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Köprülü 871, dated (820/)1417; and Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Esad Efendi 3637, dated c. seventh/thirteenth century.	*Fī māhiyyat al-siḥr wa-l-ʿazā'im wa-l-ʿayn wa-l-zajr wa-l-wahm wa-l-ruqā wa-fī kayfiyyat aʿmāl al-ṭillismāt wa-mā ʿummār al-arḍ wa-mā al-jinn, wa-mā al-shayāṭīn wa-mā al-malā'ika wa-kayf afʿālihim wa-ta'thīrāt baʿḍihim fī baʿḍ, wa-l-gharaḍ minhā huwa-l-bayān anna fī al-ʿālam fāʿilīn ghayr mar'iyīn wa-lā maḥsūsīn yusammayūn al-rūḥāniyyīn:* "On the quiddity of magic, conjurations, the [evil] eye, auspices, illusory magic, and charms, and the methods of making talismans; and [concerning] who populates the earth, who the jinn are, who the devils are, who the angels are, how they act [upon things] and their influences on each other. The purpose of it [the epistle] is to show that there exist in the world invisible[12] and intangible agents called spiritualities."
Of 52b (as all the rest below): Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atif Efendi 1681. Dated 577–578/1182.	*Fī māhiyyat al-siḥr wa-l-ʿazā'im wa-l-ruqā wa-l-kihāna wa-l-faʾl wa-l-zajr:* "On the quiddity of magic, conjurations, charms, divination, auguries, and auspices." (fol. 537^{r})

Ṣafar 1008/18 September 1599); Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Ragip Pasha 840; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Ragip Pasha 839; Sotheby's Lot 27, p. 26 in Sotheby's "Arts of the Islamic World," London 26 April 2017 (683/1284). For the short version, I refer to de Callataÿ's and Halflants's critical edition, which employs two manuscripts that are on their list; I have also consulted London, British Library, Or. 4518 and Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Ragip Pasha 840, the latter containing both the long version and the short. For other epistles, I use the texts published so far by the OUP/IIS critical editions series. Where I refer to an epistle not published yet in that series, I use the widely available yet uncritical Beirut edition, *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2008) checked against the manuscripts for accuracy.

11 For details on the manuscripts, I refer to "the technical introduction" in The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, 69–81.

12 This title is similar to the one found on manuscripts of 52a, though, in the IIS/OUP critical edition and translation, *ghayr mar'iyīn* was transcribed erroneously as *ghayr murattabayn* (in the dual form), which was, as a result, translated as "autonomous"; see The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, 5 (Arabic), 87–89 (English).

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TABLE 4.1 Variation of the title across the manuscripts (*cont.*)

Manuscript	Title
Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Ragip Pasha 840: which contains both the long version and the short. Undated	Epistle title: *Fī māhiyyat al-siḥr wa-l-ʿazāʾim wa-l-zajr wa-l-ʿayn wa-l-ruqā wa-kayfiyyat aʿmāl al-ṭillismāt wa-mā al-jinn wa-mā al-shayāṭīn wa-ma al-malāʾika wa-kayf afʿālihim wa-taʾthīrāt baʿḍihim fī baʿḍ, wa-l-gharaḍ minhā huwa al-bayān anna fī l-ʿālam fāʿilīn ghayr marʾiyīn wa-lā maḥsūsīn:* "On the quiddity of magic, conjurations, auspices, the [evil] eye, and charms, and the methods of making talismans; and [concerning] who the jinn are, who the devils are, who the angels are, how they act [upon things] and their influences on each other. The purpose of it [the epistle] is to show that there exists in the world invisible and intangible agents." 52b heading: *Fī l-siḥr wa-l-ruqā wa-l-ʿazāʾim wa-l-ṭillismāt:* "On magic, charms, conjurations, and talismans." (fol. 452^{r})
Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Ragip Pasha 839. Undated	*Fī l-siḥr wa-l-ʿazāʾim*: "On magic and conjurations." (fol. 548bis^{r})
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 6.647–6.648. Dated 695/1295	*Fī l-siḥr wa-l-ʿazāʾim*: "On magic and conjurations." (fol. 184^{v})
Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Esad Efendi 3638. Dated c. 686/1287	*Fī l-siḥr wa-l-ruqā wa-l-ʿazāʾim wa-l-ṭillismāt wa-l-kihāna wa-l-nijāma wa-māhiyyatihā wa-kayfiyyatihā:* "On magic, charms, conjurations, talismans, divination, astrology, their quiddity, and methods." (fol. 284^{r})
Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Feyzullah 2131. Dated c. 686/1287	*Fī māhiyyat al-siḥr wa-l-ʿazāʾim wa-l-ʿayn wa-l-zajr wa-l-wahm, wa-kayfiyyat aʿmāl al-ṭillismāt, wa-mā ʿummār al-arḍ, wa-mā al-jinn, wa-mā al-shayāṭīn wa-mā al-malāʾika wa-kayf afʿālihim wa-taʾthīrāt baʿḍihim fī baʿḍ, wa-l-gharaḍ minhā al-bayān anna fī l-ʿālam fāʿilīn ghayr marʾiyīn wa-lā maḥsūsīn yusammūn al-qawm rūḥāniyyīn:* "On the quiddity of magic, conjurations, the [evil] eye, auspices, and illusory magic, and the methods of making talismans, and [concerning] who populates the earth, who the jinn are, who the devils are, who the angels are, how they act [upon things], and their influences on each

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TABLE 4.1 Variation of the title across the manuscripts (*cont.*)

Manuscript	Title
	other. The purpose of it is to show that in the world there exist agents who are invisible and intangible, called the spiritual folk." (fol. 142^{r})
Oxford, Bodleian, Marsh 189. Undated	*Fī māhiyyat al-siḥr wa-l-ʿazā'im wa-l-qiyāfa wa-l-zajr wa-l-wahm*: "On the quiddity of magic, conjurations, ichnomancy[13] (*qiyāfa*), auspices, and illusory magic." (fol. 376^{v})
Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Köprülü 870. Dated c. ninth/fifteenth century	*Fī l-siḥr wa-l-ʿazā'im:* "On magic and conjurations." (fol. 308^{r})
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Arabe 2303, Dated 1020/1611	*Fī l-siḥr wa-l-ruqā wa-l-ʿazā'im*: "On magic, charms, and conjurations." (fol. 492^{r})
Sotheby's Lot 27, p. 26 in Sotheby's Arts of the Islamic World, London 26 April 2017. Dated 683/1284	*Fī l-siḥr wa-l-ruqā wa-l-ʿazā'im wa-l-ṭillismāt*: "On magic, charms, conjurations, and talismans." (non-foliated)
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Arabe 2304. Dated 1064/1654	*Fī l-siḥr wa-l-ʿazā'im:* "On magic and conjurations." (fol. 454^{v})

Curiously, although manuscripts of 52a have titles that promise inclusion of some practical instructions, this version contains no such thing, whereas 52b contains various sections on divination, astrological elections, an explanation of the existence of jinn and devils, conjurations, and instructions to make talismans and magical concoctions for attracting animals. The content of 52b conforms most closely with the titles given in manuscripts and reflects the titles

13 Divination by observing footprints.

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and descriptions given to the epistle on magic in other parts of the *Rasā'il*. In Epistle 49 the reader is referred to their "epistle on magic and conjurations," where they discuss "the actions of the *rūḥāniyyāt* of the lunar mansions."[14] This discussion is absent from 52a but forms a long section in 52b.[15]

The tone of 52b indicates its interconnection with the entire encyclopedia. It is a personal one concordant with the general tone of the *Rasā'il*. In the shorter version, the subjective perspective is completely lacking, and it reads more as a history of magic and astrology than as the esoteric agenda enunciated throughout the *Rasā'il*. In contrast, in 52b, one of the Ikhwān[16] even mentions his own involvement with magic and astrology. He relates how he was taught astrology by an esteemed practitioner and friend.[17] Elsewhere, instructions in astrological prediction about a city under siege are given to the Ikhwān: "if one of our brethren were in a city that becomes besieged by his enemy …"[18]

These clues suggest that 52b is more integral to the *Rasā'il* than is 52a,[19] although a curious reference in 52a alerts us to a kind of continuity between the two texts. There, the Ikhwān tell us "that a group among the people of India influences others by causing them to experience strange things unbelievable to most people through illusions (*bi iwhāmahum*), thus fending off magic, as we have said about them in *this epistle* [my italics]."[20] There is no other reference to Indian illusory magic in 52a, but the Ikhwān elaborate on it in the final section of 52b, where the power of *wahm* (hypnotic states, illusions) is discussed and the expertise of Indians in this art is emphasized. In fact, Chapter 7 of 52a, titled "On the power of charms, conjurations, and the [evil] eye" is a summary of the long chapter that forms the ending of 52b, as found in Atif Efendi 1681

14 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:223.

15 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:428–443; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 572^{v}–576^{r}.

16 This part is clearly related by a single member of the brotherhood. Though it begins with the first person plural, *kāna lanā saḍīq* (we had a friend), the rest is in the first personal singular: *fa ḥaḍartuhu*, *fa sa'altuhu*, *urīd an adhkur*, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*: 4:397; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi fol. 562^{v}. It is clear that the epistles were written collectively, in a group and by individual contributors.

17 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:397; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 562^{v}.

18 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:406; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 565^{r}.

19 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, "Introduction," 5–10; here de Callataÿ's suggests that 52a is "genuine" being "part and parcel of the encyclopaedic endeavor of the Brethren of Purity" to the exclusion of 52b, based on consideration of the former's concordance with other epistles in size, the number of Qur'anic references, inner structure, and cross-references in 52a to other epistles.

20 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, 97 (Arabic), 154 (English).

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(see above). In addition to the power of *wahm*, discussed in more detail below, it contains the same ideas on occult properties, with similar examples.

Nevertheless, both 52a and 52b are "genuine," for there is a precedence to the existence of multiple versions of the same epistle, such as Epistle 32: the longer version (32b), as Paul E. Walker surmises, seems to be an expanded text of the shorter version (32a), with changes and additions.[21] This could be the result of a long editing and revision process during the composition of epistles 52 and 32[22] or even of intervention by later members, if we understand the Ikhwān as a fraternity with continuous membership beyond its first founders. Furthermore, it is possible that the Ikhwān intentionally produced two versions simultaneously. One is inclined to accept the first of these possibilities and conclude that the fifty-second epistle never settled as a single stable text.

The situation is complicated further by the existence of 52b in various redactions. After the section on the lunar mansions, the text differs in three ways:

1) Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atif Efendi 1681: in the last chapter, the part on the lunar mansions is followed by a discussion about the powers of *wahm* in healing and about magic and counteracting it. The scribe of Atif Efendi 1681 adds another ending that he found in other exemplars. It is a longer exposition on *wahm*, the influence of mind and soul on the body, and the theory of occult properties, with many examples of magical and medical uses of natural things. This longer ending is taken up by Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Feyzullah 2131; Oxford, Bodleian, Marsh 189; Oxford, Bodleian, Laud Or. 260, Paris, BnF, Arabe 2303, Sotheby's and Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Esad Efendi 3638.[23]

21 The Brethren of Purity, *Sciences of the Soul and Intellect. Part I: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 32–36*, ed. and trans. Paul E. Walker, Ismail K. Poonawala, David Simonowitz, and Godefroid de Callataÿ (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2016), 9.

22 Maribel Fierro proposes the year 936 CE as the terminus ante quem of the *Rasā'il*. We may add that if the mention of *'īd Ghadīr* in Epistle 42 "On Beliefs and Religion" is referring to the public commemoration of Ghadīr Khumm started by the Buyids then the *terminus post quem* should be 945, the year the Buyids took over Baghdad. This confirms Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's account of the Brethren being active under the Buyids. Abbas Hamdani, "Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī and the Brethren of Purity," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 3 (October, 1978): 345–353. Maribel Fierro, "Bāṭinism in al-Andalus. Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964), Author of the *Rutbat al-Ḥakīm* and the *Ġāyat al-Ḥakīm*," *Studia Islamica* 84 (1996): 87–112 (106); Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophets and the Age of the Caliphate* (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 3rd ed., 2016), 196.

23 Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 576^{r}–581^{v}; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Feyzullah 2131, fols. 166^{v}–169^{v}; Oxford Bodleian, Marsh 189, fols. 395^{v}–398^{v}; Oxford, Bodleian, Laud

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2) The scribe of Esad Efendi adds another "epistle" at the end, which deals with the meaning of divination after claiming to have dealt with magic, conjurations, charms, resolve (*himma*), illusory magic (*wahm*), and talismans.[24]
3) Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Köprülü 870; Paris, BnF, Arabe 2304; and Paris, BnF 6.647–6.648: the lunar mansions are followed by a long discussion on creating magical concoctions from various organic material, including four for the purpose of attracting animals. It also contains an anecdote about a sage who freed an imprisoned man by making the *nīranj* of Mars, followed by remarks on the difference between prophets and sages and ending with the same two paragraphs as Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atif Efendi 1681. Beirut follows this. Paris, BnF 6.647–6.648 is incomplete. The text stops in the middle of the discussion about the organic concoctions.[25]

This demonstrates how unstable a text 52b is, complicating further the question of its relation to 52a. Nevertheless, as the two versions appear to us now, 52b is more demonstrative of the Ikhwān's ideas on magic in relation to the entire corpus. The earliest manuscripts are of 52b, not 52a, indicating the possibility that it (52b) was circulating more widely around the time of its composition.

2 The Polysemy of "*siḥr*"

Although the Ikhwān seem to expose their esoteric agenda by the very act of writing about it, they strategize their disclosure of "meanings" (*maʿānī*) consonant with the layer of the encyclopaedic discourse they want to emphasize. This is achieved in a way that has the potential both to reveal and to allude. This is most evident in their definitions of *siḥr*, generally translated as "magic," which may at times seem to contradict each other. To understand Epistle 52b, one must be able to discern the sense the Ikhwān ascribe to the term *siḥr*, as their discourse drifts widely and wildly between the literal and metaphorical.[26] Magic is included in Part IV of the *Rasāʾil* concerned with the divine and

Or. 260, fols. 270^{r}–272^{v}; Paris, BnF, Arabe 2303, fols. 525^{v}–529^{v}; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Esad Efendi 3638, fols. 300^{r}–302^{v}.

24 Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Esad Efendi 3638, fol. 303^{r}.

25 Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Köprülü 870, fols. 330^{v}–338^{r}; Paris, BnF, Arabe 2304, fols. 86^{v}–91^{v}; and Paris, BnF 6.647–6.648, fols. 217^{v}–218^{v}.

26 Marquet, *La philosophie des alchimistes*, 22; Marquet, *La philosophie des Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 487.

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legal laws (*al-ʿulūm al-nāmūsiyya wa-l-sharʿiyya*). In Epistle 7, concerned with the classifications of sciences, magic and talismanry are considered parts of propaedeutic knowledge (*riyāḍiyya*) which comprises sciences that facilitate living well, such as writing, language, transactions, poetry, alchemy, and trade.[27] This apparent ambiguity can be resolved by identifying the level of discourse in which the term *siḥr* is used: literal/practice, metaphorical/revelation, even political.

52b begins with a declaration that *siḥr* has many meanings in Arabic. Generally, however, magic is "clarifying and revealing the reality of a thing and causing it to manifest, [it is also] speed and precision in action";[28] this is the first definition provided. Then the Ikhwān provide the "senses" of this expertly action:

1) "telling what will happen before its occurrence," to which astrology and divination belong.
2) "altering essences (*qalb al-aʿyān*) and violating norms (*kharq al-ʿāda*)," which include prestidigitation, trickery, and sense-altering suffumigations. Talismans and medicine can be added.
3) "that which the prophets were accused of and sages known for."
4) "that which is the special knowledge of women."
5) fine skill in rhetoric, eloquence, and wit.[29]

2.1 *Astrology as Magic*

The Ikhwān explain that knowledge of astrology, divination, and even talismanry is achieved discursively. Their practitioners can attain them

> only after they know the foundations and the branches that emerge out of them. If they establish this, they gain knowledge [of something] according to those things which they must know [beforehand],[30] and they disclose it by indicating what occurs and is caused by it. In this they [people]

27 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 1:266–267; Godefroid de Callataÿ, "The Classification of Knowledge in the Rasāʾil," in el-Bizri, *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and their Rasāʾil: An Introduction*, 58–82.

28 In the Beirut edition: *al-bayān wa-l-kashf ʿan ḥaqīqat al-shayʾ wa-iẓhārihi* ***bi*** *surʿat al-ʿamal*, Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:312; in Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681 and others it is: *al-bayān wa-l-kashf ʿan ḥaqīqat al-shayʾ wa-iẓhārihi,* ***wa****-surʿat al-ʿamal*, fol. 537^{v}.

29 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:312–313; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 537^{v}.

30 In the Beirut edition and other manuscripts: *ʿamilū bi ḥasab mā yanbaghī lahum an yaʿmalūh*; in Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681: *ʿalimū … yaʿlamūh*.

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> are different in degrees and vary in ranks depending on their diligence in education, perseverance in learning, acquaintance with scholars; [how often] they accompany sages, and [how much] they occupy themselves with the study of the books[31] composed on them [astrology, divination, and talismanry], testing[32] them with mental purity, employing patience, and examining what was to judge what will be .... If he [the seeker] hits the correct target and savors its sweetness, little will he err, since, by being correct, his insight strengthens and he progresses in his pursuit and diligence.[33]

The importance of astrology stems from its being a branch of the superior science of mathematics. Mathematics is described as a king, and astrology as his vizier; the former produces quantitative knowledge, the latter qualitative. Moreover, mathematics is like "the First Intellect" and astrology like "the Soul emerging from the Intellect," indicating the Ikhwān's conviction that epistemological modes are inextricable from ontological realities.[34] If one masters mathematics and astrology, one is engaging on both micro- and macrocosmic levels, tapping into the very principles of the universe, "aiding their master to attain the eminent rank and degree in religion (*dīn*) and this world."[35] Astrology reveals the ways by which all terrestrial beings and events are ruled and caused by the celestial spheres: "the lower world is connected to the higher world in all its conditions and states."[36] Yet the Ikhwān see the universe as governed by a volitional causality that does not exclude "spiritual forces" (*quwā rūḥāniyya*). These are astral vital agents—the celestial souls—that flow through causal

31 In the Beirut edition: *wa-l-ishtighāl bi-l-dars*; in Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681: *istiʿmāl al-dars*, which does not make sense. Other manuscripts, such as Paris, BnF 6.647–6.648 (fol. 190^{r}), agree with the Beirut edition.

32 In the Beirut edition, Paris, BnF 6.647–6.648; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Köprülü 870; Paris, BnF, Arabe 2304, Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Ragip Pasha 839: *al-tabaḥḥur*; in Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Esad Efendi 3638, Istanbul, Süleymaniye Feyzullah 2131; Oxford, Bodleian, Laud Or. 260; Sotheby's Lot 27; Istanbul, Süleymaniye Ragip Pasha 840: *wa-l-tajruba*.

33 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:332; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 543^{r}.

34 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:396; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 562$^{r–v}$.

35 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:396; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 561^{v}–562^{v}.

36 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:386; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 559^{v}–560^{r}.

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channels, communicating the Divine Will.[37] Sometimes they are referred to as the angels (*al-malā'ika*).[38]

> The actions of the planets and their *rūḥāniyyāt* flow in the world of generation and corruption like the flow of the powers of the soul in bodies. Each planet in [its] sphere has aspects and terms, and the terms are in degrees that have forms. From each form a *rūḥāniyya* descends into the world of generation and corruption connected to that which is like it and attached to its image. It is assigned to it for a decreed time. These are the angels of God Almighty.[39]

After reiterating that "the higher celestial world governs (*ḥākim*) the terrestrial world," the Ikhwān refer the reader to their epistle on the action of the spiritual principles (*rūḥaniyyīn*), citing their explanation of the influence of the macrocosm on the microcosm.[40] Indeed, in Epistle 49 on the states of the spiritual principles, they discuss the place of the *rūḥāniyyāt* in the Neoplatonic emanative scheme. They use the term *rūḥāniyyāt* to describe the localizations of the power of the Universal Soul in the planets, being the agency by which planets influence the microcosm. There too they are referred to as angels. Moreover, under each planetary *rūḥāniyya* they provide a set of correspondences that includes plants, talents, professions, and other things.[41]

We find a Neoplatonic explanation of these spiritual forces in 52a. The Ikhwān explain that "the first power that flows from the Universal Soul towards the world is in the noble luminous entities that are the fixed stars and then after them [into] the moving stars."[42] The *rūḥāniyyāt* are linked to and interact with the terrestrial world in two ways; first, "by way of the natures of bodies [to

37 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:340; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 546r.

38 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:410; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 566r–v; Liana Saif, "From *Ġāyat al-ḥakīm* to *Šams al-ma'ārif*: Ways of Knowing and Paths of Power in Medieval Islam," in "Islamicate Occultism: New Perspectives," ed. Matthew Melvin-Koushki and Noah Gardiner, special double issue of *Arabica* 64, nos. 3–4 (2017): 297–345, esp. 305–308; The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, "Introduction," 44–45.

39 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:339; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 545v–546r.

40 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:367; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 553v–554r.

41 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:212–226.

42 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, 12–13.

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which they are linked], as is reported in the books of astrology," and second, by way of their souls and volition.[43]

For the Ikhwān, astrology and divination constitute a type of magic because they conform to their definition of *siḥr* as the knowledge and art of predicting the future and revealing hidden things, including the concealed inner thoughts of the querent.[44] They also emphasize that astrology is the foundation of talismanry.[45] Most significantly, it is a kind of knowledge that elucidates the workings of the universe and the spiritual networks that govern the celestial and terrestrial worlds. Without astrology wisdom itself is out of reach.[46]

2.2 *Magic as Salvation*

The second definition of *siḥr* given by the Ikhwān—"altering essences (*qalb al-aʿyān*) and violating norms (*kharq al-ʿāda*)"—has exoteric and esoteric meanings. In the literal sense, it includes any magical operation that causes external transformation, such as talismans and amulets, but it also alludes to self-transformation. Magic and astrology-as-magic, in the esoteric sense, thus become eschatological tools. Such an undertone is missing in 52a, but we are told there that magic is that "whereby subjects are joined to [the rank of] kings and kings to that of angels."[47] In 52b, they write that acquiring "knowledge of this necessitates to whoever learns it the attainment of human excellence, that is receiving angelic forms after death," which is the Ikhwān's priority in their encyclopedic discourse as a whole.[48] To demonstrate this, they include in their epistle on magic a fable that at first sounds out of place, that of the ailing king and his vizier.

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43 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic 1*, 120–121.

44 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:353; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 550^{r}.

45 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:333. Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 543^{v}.

46 Astrology permeates the *Rasāʾil*, but it is not within the scope of this article to investigate the various ways it is incorporated into the world-view of the Ikhwān. Our interest here is the relationship between astrology and magic in 52b. For an overview of astrology in the *Rasāʾil*, see Marquet, "La détermination astrale," *passim*; Godefroid de Callataÿ, "Introduction to Epistle 36," in The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity, *Sciences of the Soul and Intellect, Part 1: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 32–36*, ed. Paul E. Walker, Ismail K. Poonawala et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015), 137–190, here 137–142, 146–153.

47 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic* 1, 95 (English); 16 (Arabic).

48 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:339; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 546^{r}.

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At the pinnacle of his wealth and power, a Persian king sees an apparition of a well-dressed handsome young man who stares at the king with derision and scorn. He orders his men to capture the young one but to no avail. The king demands to know who he is. The young man replies: "O you pitiful man! O you who is enticed by temporal sovereignty and partial kingship! What kind of king are you? You are a slave (*mamlūk*) and not master (*mālik*) …. I am heavenly kingship and divine sovereignty!"

From this encounter, the king becomes overwhelmed by the mundanity of his powers, and as a result, he falls ill, in mind and body. His vizier consults a sheikh who recommends that they seek the help of a wise man from the mountains of Sarandīb [present-day Sri Lanka]. Hope reinvigorates the king and he begins to recover. They send for the wise man who dispatches two of his pupils. He orders them to begin instructing the king on the propaedeutic sciences after which they ought to progress to the divine sciences. They instruct the king and his vizier accordingly until both of them reach enlightenment and spiritual salvation. The king rewards the two wise men and grants them his own kingdom. The temptations of mundane kingship overwhelm them and they trade "heavenly kingship" for it. We are told "they desert the licit magic (*siḥr ḥalāl*) that descended onto them, by which they were ordered to abide, and through which salvation was reached by those who were saved. They returned to illicit magic (*siḥr ḥarām*), misguided and misguiding."[49]

To assert this eschatological narrative, the Ikhwān subvert the traditional interpretation of the Qur'anic verses dealing with Hārūt and Mārūt that presents them as the angels who tested humans by teaching them sorcery.[50] Instead, the Ikhwān engage in a kind of esoteric exegesis and correlate the demise of the monks with that of Hārūt and Mārūt, explaining,

> As for the magic mentioned in the Qur'an, endowed upon the two angels in Babel, Hārūt and Mārūt, the public has made many banal statements about it without any truth. This narrative [concerning Hārūt and Mārūt] has a subtle meaning described by the scholars who have [attained knowledge] of the Book [and communicated it] to the elite (*khawāṣṣ*) whom they trusted. They conferred it to their noble progeny and eminent friends. We want to give an example of this.[51]

49 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:327; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 538^{r}–542^{r}.

50 Yahya Michot, "Ibn Taymiyya on Astrology: Annotated Translation of Three Fatwas," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, no. 2 (2000): 147–208, here 158–159.

51 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:315; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 538^{r}.

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This example is the fable of the king and his vizier. In a section concerned with magic in the Qur'an, 52a refers to the verse containing the story of Hārūt and Mārūt, but no such *ta'wīl* (interpretation) is given, only the exoteric meaning of magic is delivered: "If, from the power and the science of magic, one could already ensure the separation of man and wife, what would be left after that? Or would there be doubt about this narrative after what is uttered by the Qur'an, whose validity we know?"[52] This attests again to the compatibility of 52b with the rest of the *Rasā'il* and the Ikhwān's methods.

It is not only magic but astrology too that are given eschatological meanings.[53] The Ikhwān write, "Know O Brother, may God support you and us with a spirit from Him, that through knowledge of astrology, you attain guidance in ascending the heavens and entry to the Highest Location."[54] Elsewhere, they assert that it is through astrology that one is able "to reach the angelic home and the heavenly rank."[55] Astrology allows this because:

> All things in the world of generation and corruption, small or large, subtle or manifest, are [what they are] by celestial decree and heavenly command. All of this is delineated in a manifest book. Whoever reads it well will have knowledge of all these, and his soul will yearn (*tashawwaqat*) to ascend to the world of the spheres, the expanses of the heavens, the abode of life, the space of bliss, the garden of spirits, the home of jubilance and fulfilment.[56]

This reflects a Neoplatonic leaning and is reminiscent of the following statement from Plotinus's second *Enneads* (II.3):

> We may think of the stars as letters perpetually being inscribed on the heavens or inscribed once for all and yet moving as they pursue the other tasks allotted to them: upon these main tasks will follow the quality of signifying, just as the one principle underlying any living unit enables us

52 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, 105 (English), 27 (Arabic).

53 Pierre Lory, "La magie chez les Ikhwân al-Safâ'," in "Sciences occultes et l'Islam," ed. Pierry Lory and Annick Regourd, special issue of *Bulletin d'études orientales* 44 (1992): 147–159, here 156.

54 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:367; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 554^{r}.

55 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:386; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 559^{v}–560^{r}.

56 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:393. Not in Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681.

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> to reason from member to member, so that for example we may judge of character and even of perils and safeguards by indications in the eyes or in some other part of the body. If these parts of us are members of a whole, so are we: in different ways the one law applies. All teems with symbol; the wise man is the man who in any one thing can read another, a process familiar to all of us in not a few examples of everyday experience. But what is the comprehensive principle of co-ordination? Establish this and we have a reasonable basis for divination, not only by stars but also by birds and other animals, from which we derive guidance in our varied concerns. *All things must be enchained* [my italics].[57]

The Ikhwān even say, in their justification of astrology, that knowledge of God is achievable through the study of His creation because "things are chained to one another" (*al-ashyāʾ kullahā marbūṭa baʿḍuhā bi baʿḍ*).[58] Despite the striking similarity of expression here, only enneads IV, V, and VI are believed to have been paraphrased into Arabic and available at the time of the Ikhwān as the *Theology of Aristotle*.[59] In this rendition, ascendance is fueled with the soul's "yearning" (*shawq* and *tashawwuq*), an idea the reader also encounters in Epistle 3 on "astronomy," where knowledge of the stars is presented as facilitating liberation from materiality and the attainment of salvation and enlightenment.[60] There the Ikhwān quote explicitly the *Theology of Aristotle*.[61] Moreover, in Epistle 16, knowledge of the stars (astrology and astronomy) is related to the ascent of the individual soul to the world of universals through the celestial world. It is even stretched to explain the return or ascent of the macrocosmic Soul to the realm of the Intellect, an event that leads to the Great Resurrection (*qiyāma*).[62]

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57 Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Penguin Books, 1991) II.3, 80–81.

58 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:387, 412; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 560ʳ.

59 Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the Theology of Aristotle* (London: Duckworth, 2002), 6–8.

60 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, ed., *Uthūlūjiyā Aflūṭīn ʿind al-ʿarab* (Qom: Intishārāt Bīdār, 1992 [1413AH]), 19–20, 117–118.

61 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 1:137–138; The Brethren of Purity, *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On Astronomia: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 3*, ed. and trans. F. Jamil Ragep and Taro Mimura (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Institute, 2015), 89; Badawī, *Uthūlūjiyā Aflūṭīn*, 22.

62 The Brethren of Purity, *On the Natural Sciences: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 15–21*, ed. and trans. Carmela Baffioni (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2013), 147–154.

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To the Ikhwān, *siḥr* is thus never only just magic. Particular and transitive magical actions and astrological knowledge can disclose universal truths, the absorption of which transforms the soul of the operator by loosening its bonds to the material world. This is licit magic (*siḥr ḥalāl*), described as "the talisman composed for the cultivation of the world, the sought-for stone, the desired mineral. It is the grand magnet, and the red sulfur."[63]

2.3 *Magic of Prophets and Sages*

The second definition of magic as "that which the prophets were accused of and sages known for," subverts the traditional "binary logic of revelation," according to which *siḥr* of the unbelievers is contrasted with the authentic signs of divine revelation.[64] Instead, the Ikhwān promote *siḥr* by subsuming miracles under it and positioning philosophy on a level with prophecy: "every prophet who spoke, every sage who told the truth and brought about miracles and showed [divine] signs; he was labeled with this name [*sāḥir*, mage] and became known by this brand among the tyrannical nations and unjust parties, as a way to discredit the prophets and challenge the sages."[65] But the Ikhwān reclaim the term *siḥr* and apply it to the feats of sages and the miracles of prophets. To do this, they formulate another, wider definition of magic: "all words and actions that charm (v. *saḥara*) the minds, and submit souls with the intention to fascinate and submit [them], to be listened to, to receive satisfaction, to be obeyed, and to be complied with."[66]

Here one recalls the *Theology of Aristotle*, where *siḥr ḥaqq* (true magic) is distinguished from *siḥr ṣināʿī* (artificial trickery). The former is described as the magic of scholars:

> And the scholar (*al-ʿālim*) mage is the one who imitates the world (*al-ʿālam*) and performs its actions to the extent that he is able to, in that he uses love in one situation and domination in another. If he wishes to use these, he uses medicines and natural operations, and these permeate earthly things; but some of them often strengthen the action of love in

63 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:413; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 567^{v}.

64 Travis Zadeh, "Magic, Marvel, and Miracle in Early Islamic Thought," in *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. David J. Collins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 235–267, esp. 239.

65 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:314; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 537^{v}.

66 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:314; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 538^{r}.

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> others, and some of them react to others and thus yield to them. At the outset of a magical operation the mage ought to know well the things that yield to one another. If he does know them, he is able to attract something through the power of love that acts on the thing.[67]

The Ikhwān extend this dichotomy by juxtaposing the magic of the sage/scholar with that of the prophets. First, they assert that the magic of prophets is *siḥr ḥalāl* (licit magic); it is

> Calling to God, the Exalted, with truth and honest speech. That which is illicit is the opposite, like the actions of those who oppose the prophets and the enemies of sages, embellishing falsity and making it manifest, pushing away the truth and denying it with false speech, inserting doubt and ambivalence into [the minds of] weak men and women to turn them away from the path to God and the road to the Hereafter, to enchant their minds with falsity.[68]

However, the Ikhwān still distinguish the extraordinary actions of prophets from those of sages. The first belong to what they call intellectual magic (*siḥr ʿaqlī*), by which prophets "enchant the minds of the faithful" under divine decree. God inspires the intellectual faculty of prophets directly. On the other hand, the magic of the sages, philosophers, and scholars is "soul-enabled magic" (*sīḥr nafsī*) achieved through nature (*bi wāsiṭa al-ṭabīʿa*); it is also called "natural magic" (*siḥr ṭabīʿī*). In this case, the senses register natural phenomena, then the soul communicates the input to the intellect. The Neoplatonic hypostases are reflected in this process: the Universal Soul directs its attention to the Intellect from which it emanated and for which it yearns. Unlike intellectual magic, the magic of the sages is discursive, but, by achieving this knowledge with the resolve to achieve enlightenment, the sage is able to engage with the emanative universe.[69] Marquet refers to the intellectual magic of the prophets as one that operates "by means of reason," understanding the word *ʿaql* as the faculty of reason, implying discursive thinking instead of the activation of the higher part of the soul that receives divine revelation which is a more accurate

67 Badawī, *Uthūlūjiyā Aflūṭīn*, 75–76.

68 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:314–315; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 538^{r}.

69 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:408–409; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 565^{v}–566^{r}; Lory, "La magie chez les Ikhwân al-Safâ'," 154.

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way of understanding it.[70] Here, too, one is reminded of the *Theology of Aristotle*, where a distinction is made between intellectual revelatory knowledge and discursive thought.[71] It is with this in mind that we must understand this statement by the Ikhwān:

> Know, O Brother, that in all crafts, their exoteric aspects (*ẓawāhir*) are established for the benefit of bodies, and their esoteric aspects (*bawāṭin*) are for the benefit of the souls … their exoteric aspects are identical to their esoteric aspects and do no negate them. Their exoteric aspects indicate the skill of the Sublime Wise Maker, and their esoteric aspects indicate His transcendence and calls to His worship; they signify (His right to) obedience.[72]

Attending to the transformation and nurture of souls is the magic of the prophets that they actualize through the highest faculties of the soul. Second to it, but sublime nevertheless, is the magic of the sages that attends to nature and works with the elements; such action makes the sage more intimate with the works of God.

2.4 *Political Implications*

According to the Ikhwān, enlightenment privileges the individual to become a rightly guided leader of the Muslim community. That great intellectual magic is the manifestation of power received directly by divine inspiration and aid, and the Ikhwān stress that "this is the trait of the great *walāya*/*wilāya* and the grand *khilāfa*; this is the deputyship with which God privileged the People of the Message (*ahl al-risāla*, i.e., the prophets) who do not need a director or a scholar but themselves … that is why they deserved leadership (*riyāsa*) and were marked by deputyship (*khilāfa*)."[73] The Ikhwān also see the Macrocosmic Man as a *khalīfa*, God's deputy in the created world.[74] This recalls the notion of *khilāfa* in the Qur'an: "Your lord said to the angels, 'I will make upon the earth a *khalīfa*' "

70 Marquet, *La philosophie des Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 488–489.

71 Badawī, *Uthūlūjiyā Aflūṭīn*, 6–8, 31–32, 61–64.

72 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:396; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 562^{r}.

73 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:375; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 556^{v}.

74 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 1:29, 306; Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *al-Risāla al-jāmi'a*, ed. Jamīl Ṣalība, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1949–1951), 1:496–497; Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn 'Arabī, and the Ismā'īlī Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 176–177.

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(Q 2:30). Grand deputyship is divine and bestowed upon Adam, the prophets, and the imams.[75] The *riyāsa* of this divine deputyship is contrasted with the *siyāsa* of terrestrial and temporal deputyship, which requires astrological expertise.[76] For the Ikhwān, therefore, true caliphate, prophecy, and imamate constitute the "Great Magic."[77]

The Ikhwān then stress that those people who become temporal caliphs, preoccupied with mundane affairs, are really the caliphs of Satan; they are unjust and hostile. Such a caliph is a slave (*mamlūk*) and not a master (*mālik*), coming upon his position with trickery and disobedience. They become restricted by a planetary spiritual force (*rūḥāniyya*) and thus need astrology to manage their affairs.[78] Here the Ikhwān appear to articulate anti-Abbasid sentiments—the Abbasids, as widely known, were avid patrons of astrology[79]—a sentiment they also express in the animal fable, as Marquet has pointed out.[80]

The Ikhwān also write:

> And know, O compassionate and loyal brother, that every science perfected and action that issued from the prophets, messengers, the Rightly Guided Caliphs who succeeded them, the pure people of their houses, and their companions among the faithful, these [belong to] intellectual magic and divine command … every action, art, craft, and labor, that manifest from sages and philosophers, [including] the propaedeutic sciences, announcing astral matters and judging according to them, these [belong to] soul-enabled magic that arise by the mediation of nature.[81]

75 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:377; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 558^{r}.

76 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:374, 376; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 556$^{r–v}$.

77 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:378; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 557^{v}.

78 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:374–376; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 556^{r}–557^{r}.

79 Stephen Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology in the Islamic World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014). Damien Janos, "Al-Ma'mūn's Patronage of Astrology," in *The Place to Go: Contexts of Learning in Baghdad, 750–1000 C.E.*, ed. Jens Scheiner and Damien Janos (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2014), 389–454; Edward S. Kennedy, *Astronomy and Astrology in the Medieval Islamic World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); David Pingree, "Astrology," in *Religion Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period*, ed. M.J.L. Young, J.D. Latham, and R.B. Serjeant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 290–300.

80 Marquet, *Les Frères de la Pureté*, 568.

81 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:408; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 565^{v}.

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We must understand intellectual magic in this religio-political context as the ability to lead people into rectitude and the establishment of a sacral state and the power to transform a mundane caliphate into a sublime one. It may seem a contradiction to dismiss the use of astrology and the mediation of the *rūḥāniyyāt* in a text that is occupied with them, but their employment is only legitimate in soul-enabled magic of the sages, not that of caliphs and imams.[82] Furthermore, the apparent contradiction can be resolved by understanding that a metaphorical/esoteric discourse is at work here, along with the literal/exoteric explication.

Soul-enabled magic can nevertheless be used pragmatically in state administration. The Ikhwān write: "Know, O brother, that the best thing people have attained from this art [magic] and absorbing its sciences is knowing the state of kings, sultans, caliphs, successors, princes, generals, leaders of war, viziers, secretaries, royal custodians, and the rise of states and their fates, longevity of natives …."[83] This is followed by astrological elections for ensuring the legitimacy of the caliph/king who receives the official oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*).[84]

The use of magic and divination in state administration and military matters is found in the ps.-Aristotelian Hermetica, a group of texts that take the form of epistles and conversations between Alexander the Great and Aristotle, in which the philosopher teaches his royal pupil about the workings of the universe, the forces within it, the hidden powers of nature, and magic. Aristotle bases his instructions on knowledge he received from Hermes. The Ikhwān cite the ps.-Aristotelian text known as *al-Istūṭās* as the source of the

82 Liana Saif, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā"s Religious Reform and Magic: Beyond the Ismāʿīlī Hypothesis," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 30, no. 1 (2019): 34–68. There I argue that the Brethren aimed with "their *Rasāʾil* to establish an anti-sectarian religio-political reform that they refer to as the Third Way. Its strategy comprises reconciling revelation and philosophy; valuing the message of religions other than Islam (Christianity, Judaism, Brahmans, and Sabians); and addressing some Shīʿī specific practices and doctrines which it scrutinizes. The Ikhwān mitigate the doctrinal boundaries between Shīʿism and other denominations by adopting a more equable position which is consonant with Zaydī and Ibāḍī attitudes towards the contentious issues of imamate, caliphate, and *wilāya*/*walāya*. Furthermore, magic for them is a characteristic feature of the Third Way. The Ikhwān see magic as the conceptual and practical pivot of the Third Way, since it is the culmination of philosophy and revelation, making it the appropriate tool for regulating state guardianship and sublimating the temporal state itself into a sacred city instead of investing sacral power into a single person. The Ikhwān themselves are the ushers of this utopia."

83 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:369; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 554^{v}.

84 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:369; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 554^{v}–556^{r}.

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epistle's magic of the lunar mansions.[85] They also reproduce almost the entire content of another ps.-Aristotelian text concerned with attracting animals by magic.[86]

In another text that belonged to this corpus and might have been known by the Ikhwān, called *al-Isṭimākhīs*, Aristotle gives instructions for creating four talismans and four amulets that would aid Alexander in securing victory.[87] In the same text, Aristotle tells Alexander that every king has a spiritual power (*rūḥāniyya*) attached to him that connects him to his star, adding that kings made covenant with these powers to guide them away from harm, ensure their victory, and defeat their enemies.[88] As we saw above, this precise idea is deemed by the Ikhwān to be characteristic of temporal sovereigns.

The espousal of occult sciences and state administration is also found in the ps.-Aristotelian (but not expressly Hermetic) *Kitāb al-Siyāsa fī tadbīr al-riyāsa* ("The book of governance on managing leadership") which purports to be an epistle from Aristotle to Alexander the Great offering political, moral, and dietary advice. The final chapter of the text, *Sirr al-asrār*, is concerned with astral magic. The work itself claims in the proem to be a translation from Greek into Syriac then into Arabic by the translator Yaḥyā b. al-Biṭrīq, who flourished in Baghdad in the third/ninth century, but there is insufficient evidence for the existence of a Greek original.[89] Aristotle tells Alexander: "If you are able, do not stand, sit, eat, drink, or undertake any action without consulting astrology."[90]

85 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:443–445; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 572^{r}–576^{r}; Turkey, National Library of Manisa, MS 1461, fols. 18^{v}–25^{v}.

86 This section does not appear in Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, but in Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, IV, 450–457; also in Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Köprülü 870 and Paris, BnF, Arabe 2304. Compare with London, British Library, Delhi Arabic 1946, fols. 21^{v}–32^{r}.

87 London, British Library, Delhi Arabic 1946, fols. 1^{v}–21^{r}.

88 London, British Library, Delhi Arabic 1946, fols. 5^{v}–5^{r}.

89 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, ed., *al-Uṣūl al-yūnāniyya lil-naẓariyyāt al-siyāsiyya fī l-Islām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1954), 69. On the influence, circulation, and structure of this text, see Mario Grignaschi, "L'origine et les métamorphoses du *Sirr al-'asrâr*," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 43 (1976): 7–112; Mario Grignaschi, "La diffusion du Secretum Secretorum dans l'Europe occidentale," *Archive d'Histoire Doctrinale et Litterature du Moyen Age* 48 (1980): 7–70; Mario Grignaschi, "Remarques sur la formation et l'interprétation du *Sirr al-asrâr*," in *Pseudo-Aristotle The Secret of Secrets. Sources and Influences*, ed. W.F. Ryan and C.B. Schmitt (London: Warburg Institute, 1982), 3–33; Steven J. Williams, "The Early Circulation of the Pseudo-Aristotelian 'Secret of Secrets' in the West," in *Micrologus* 2 (1994): 127–144; Mahmoud Manzalaoui, "The Pseudo-Aristotelian 'Kitāb Sirr al-Asrār.' Facts and Problems," *Oriens* 23–24 (1974): 147–257.

90 Badawī, *al-Uṣūl al-yūnāniyya*, 85.

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In the last chapter, Aristotle prescribes an elaborate talisman known as "the talisman of the king," which insures obedience, awe, and victory.[91]

2.5 *Magic as Medicine*

The fable of the king and his vizier, overlooked in studies of the Ikhwān's magic and occult sciences, encapsulates their esotericism,[92] which reveals and obfuscates. It unfolds into many layers of meanings that extend even beyond Epistle 52. For example, the king's salvation represents magic as an eschatological tool to transcend mundane kingship, and hints at magic as sacral power. His physical recuperation is a demonstration of magic as a form of medicine. The Ikhwān expand on this latter meaning after the fable. They write that medicine "is a kind of licit magic (*siḥr ḥalāl*) because it is the alteration of essences from a state of corruption to soundness, from deficiency to completion. Illicit magic (*al-siḥr al-ḥarām*) is its opposite, introducing corruption into sound bodies with that which ruins and corrupts its temperament and weakens its natures."[93] Astonishingly, here the Ikhwān refer to the hadith that calls for the execution of the sorcerer.[94] Illicit magic is magic that hurts and damages, and in this way, in this particular meaning, the Ikhwān endorse the Qur'anic denunciation of sorcery:

> And they followed [instead] what the devils had recited during the reign of Solomon. It was not Solomon who disbelieved, but the devils disbelieved, teaching people magic and that which was revealed to the two angels at Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt. But the two angels do not teach anyone unless they say, "We are a trial, so do not disbelieve [by practicing magic]." And [yet] they learn from them that by which they cause separation between a man and his wife. But they do not harm anyone through it except by permission of God. And the people learn what harms them and does not benefit them.
>
> Q 1:102

91 Badawī, *al-Uṣūl al-yūnāniyya*, 159–164.

92 For an extensive discussion on the evolution of Islamic esotericism, *bāṭiniyya*, as a shifting and historically contingent discourse, see Liana Saif, "What is Islamic Esotericism?," in "Islamic Esotericism," ed. Liana Saif, special issue of *Correspondences: Journal for the Study of Esotericism* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1–59.

93 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:327; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 542^{r}.

94 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:328; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 542^{r}; al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, bk. 17, ch. 27, *ḥadīth* 44, https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/17/44.

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The same verse that, above, was interpreted esoterically is now taken literally when the discourse shifts into the transitive practice of medicine, which is akin to talismanry. Both practices must be used to achieve amelioration and progress; this is the condition of their legitimacy. Furthermore, just as in making talismans, in medicine, a physician needs to learn "the starry craft" (*al-ṣināʿa al-nujūmiyya*) "because it is the root and the foundation of all terrestrial operations and occurrences in natural bodies."[95]

The miracles of the prophets and the actions of the sages work on deficient souls just as the medicines of the physicians heal the bodies. Any soul that lacks knowledge of God is "deficient and incomplete, sick and unhealthy." Prophets and sages direct "people with illnesses of the soul" (*aṣḥāb al-ʿilal al-nafsāniyya*) back to the path to God by calling for patience.[96] At this point, the Ikhwān refer the reader to the fable of the physician in Epistle 44 (on the convictions of the Brethren of Purity) in which medicine as magic now takes on a metaphorical garb. There we are told of the sage/physician who comes upon a city whose people are suffering from an "invisible illness" (*maraḍ khafī*) without being aware of their affliction. Believing that if he gives them a diagnosis bluntly, they would turn away from him and reject his help, he approaches one of the noblemen of the city and gives him a medical potion and some snuff. His health is restored immediately. Grateful, the nobleman asks the physician what he can do in return; the physician requests only that the nobleman heal with these medicines just one more person. This has a secret ripple effect. Eventually the healers are strengthened and emboldened by the increase in public health, they eventually make the truth known and administer by force the medicines to the rest, until the entire population is healed.[97] This is an allegory expressing the mission of the Ikhwān themselves, whose identity is hidden but is destined to emerge: "It is we, the society (*jamāʿa*) of Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, noble and pure friends, who were asleep in the cave of our father Adam for a period of time while the vicissitudes of ages and the calamities of misfortune rolled on, till the day of reckoning following the dispersal in the lands of the kingdom of the Greatest Law (*al-nāmūs al-akbar*)."[98] The Ikhwān refer to themselves as "physicians of the souls," making them similar to the prophets. It is clear, then, that

95 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:328; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 542^{r} (margins); Liana Saif, "Between Medicine and Magic: Spiritual Aetiology and Therapeutics in Medieval Islam," in *Demons and Illness from Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, ed. Siam Bhayro and Catherine Rider (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 313–338.

96 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:329–330; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 542^{v}.

97 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:14–15.

98 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:18.

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their discussion of medicine exemplifies perfectly the subtle shifts in discourse that characterize their style of writing. Medicine is medicine, but it is also magic and a religio-political mission.

2.6 *Magic as* wahm

For the Ikhwān, it is the faculty by which the feat is facilitated that distinguishes the magic of the prophets from that of the sages. The miracles of the prophets are direct divine effusions that are received by their intellect, whereas the sage-mage acts on nature and others through the soul (*nafs*). In the final portions of all the manuscripts, save the ones containing the ps.-Aristotelian concoctions (including the Beirut edition), the Ikhwān describe the most inferior type of magic, that is, illusory magic.

The Ikhwān explain that the sphere of the Moon is its body, upon which its soul acts. Similarly, "the [human] body is the sphere of the pneuma" upon which it acts. The parts of the body correspond to parts of the zodiac, and the kind of effect the pneuma has on the body is therefore determined by celestial conditions. The pneuma courses through the body at the command of the "head," the body's sun. The welfare of the pneuma depends on the welfare of the body. The link between body and pneuma is forged by the faculty of *wahm*. This word can be translated as "imagination," but in this context it indicates the capacity to process sensory input to perceive internal significance and related images. The Ikhwān say, "Know that *wahm* is a power that extracts meanings from sensory input (*maḥsūsāt*) and channels them to the pneuma." Consequently, if the physical temperament is balanced, the *wahm* would channel well-rounded and balanced perceptions to the pneuma. Because the body follows the pneuma, it is affected by its vacillations. The Ikhwān give an example of this: A man eats a good meal. Just as he finishes, another comes and tells him that the food is poisoned. If the man is intellectually limited (*qalīl al-ʿaql*), he will believe this to be true, making his pneuma and then his body sick, and he may even die because of this *wahm*.

The Ikhwān then employ a tactic used before, conflating the vocation of the physician with that of the mage. They tell us that physicians strengthen the physical temperament using "good *wahm*." One of Galen's friends, they report, believed he was cursed by a woman. Galen reassured him that it could not be so, but the man insisted that he had been bewitched. The next time the friends met, Galen gave him a recipe for a "magical" concoction, which the friend prepared and used. As a result of his *wahm*, he recovered (a kind of the placebo effect). According to the Ikhwān, conjurations and invocations taken from the Torah, Bible, and Qur'an also work by *wahm*. They especially affect women, children, and fools but have little effect on "people of understanding." The evil

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eye is facilitated by the same faculty. They emphasize that these things take effect by belief and are made ineffective by denial.[99]

In the alternative ending provided in Atif Efendi 1681, we finally have an explanation of what the Ikhwān mean by women's magic: "the magic that women specialize in [works] through *awhām* (pl. of *wahm*) and penetrates the [minds of] fools among men, women, and youths by the superstitions (*khurāfat*) and old wives' tales (*makhārīq*) that they use, the nonsense they write, and the incitements and *nīranj*s they create." This is immediately contrasted with the magic of the scholars (*'ulamā'*), which depends on the knowledge of the spiritual forces of the cosmos, constituting the foundation of talismanry and "the transformation of essences," the true *siḥr* of the Ikhwān.[100]

To understand this "womanly" magic, a distinction must be made between what is referred to in this article as "soul-enabled" magic, practiced by philosophers and sages, and pneumatic magic, that is, *wahm* magic. This is based on the Aristotelian conceptualization of the soul. *Wahm* is the lowest faculty of the soul (*nafs*); it operates on the level of perception and interacts with semi-substantial pneuma (*nafs*), which is the intermediary between body and soul. It is more akin to the medical *spiritus*/*rūḥ* (*rūḥ*/*arwāḥ*), whereas soul-enabled magic operates at the high level of understanding (*fahm*). The magic of the prophets is actualized through the highest faculty of intellection.

3 Practice

One of the main features of 52b that distinguishes it from 52a is the dominance of astrological theory and practical instructions, despite being scattered randomly through the text. It includes chapters on advantageous states of the planets, astrological correspondences, methods of astrological interrogation (such as those aiming to discover a hidden thing), ascertaining the occurrence of conception, the state of a fetus, the validity of news, and the identity of a thief. It has chapters also on the properties of stones and other natural materials. The longest chapter of the epistle is on the twenty-eight lunar mansions and the talismans to be constructed under each of them. It is derived from the ps.-Aristotelian Hermetic text *al-Istūṭās*.[101] In some manuscripts of 52b

99 Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi, fols. 576^{v}–577^{r}; 579^{v}–580^{v}.

100 Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 560^{v}–561^{r}.

101 Turkey, National Library of Manisa, MS 1461, fols. 18^{v}–25^{v}; Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4: 428–443; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 572^{r}–576^{r}. Most of the texts that constitute the ps.-Aristotelian Hermetica are given strange, Greek-sounding

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this is followed by recipes for natural amulets known as *nīranj*s and four concoctions to attract animals, which are likewise taken from another known ps.-Aristotelian Hermetic text.[102] In 52a, the Ikhwān devote the longest chapter to the magic and rituals of Sabians and Harranians, but there is nothing resembling the content of the ps.-Aristotelian Hermetica.[103] Although the content of the ps.-Aristotelian Hermetica accords well with some descriptions found in medieval histories concerning the Sabians,[104] their conflation with a Hermetic or ps.-Hermetic body of belief and practice, a tendency found in Pingree, Marquet, and many others, is problematic.[105]

In the versions of 52b that contain the ps.-Aristotelian Hermetic concoctions (see above), a more explicit restriction on practice is found: "I ask you to stay away, loyal and gentle brother, may God Almighty support you and us with a spirit from him, from prohibited [magical] work or that which is not allowed by the Law, except for asset burial, digging a well or a river, building

titles: *Isṭimākhīs, Isṭimāṭīs, Istūṭās, Hadīṭūs*, and *Madīṭīs*. See also Kevin van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 101–102, 114, and Charles Burnett, "Arabic, Greek and Latin Works on Astrological Magic Attributed to Aristotle," in *Pseudo Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*, ed. J. Kray, W.F. Ryan, and C.B. Schmitt (London: Warburg Institute, 1989), 84–97.

102 London, British Library, Delhi Arabic 1946, fols. 21^{v}–32^{r}; Oxford, Bodleian, Arab 221, fols. 1^{v}–4^{r}; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Köprülü 870, fols. 333^{r}–338r^{v}; Paris, BnF, Arabe 2304, fols. 88^{v}–89^{v}.

103 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, 116–146 (English), 44–85 (Arabic).

104 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, "Introduction," 36–41; David Pingree, "The Sabians of Harran and the Classical Tradition," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 9 (2002): 8–35; J. Hämeen-Anttila, "Continuity of Pagan Religious Traditions in Tenth-Century Iraq," in *Ideologies as International Phenomena*, ed. A. Paniano and G. Pettinato (Bologna: International Association for Cultural Studies, 2002), 89–107; Tamara Green, *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Harran* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); F.E. Peters, "Hermes and Harran: The Roots of Arabic-Islamic Occultism," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honour of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Michael Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 185–215.

105 Marquet, *Les Frères de la Pureté*, 10, Pingree, "Some Sources of the Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 1–15, here 15; for an assessment of Marquet's views on the Sabians of Harran and Hermeticism, see Godefroid de Callataÿ, "Les sabéens de Ḥarrān dans l'oeuvre d'Yves Marquet," in *Images et Magie: Picatrix entre Orient et Occident*, ed. Jean-Patrice Boudet, Anna Caiozzo, and Nicolas Weill-Parot (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2011), 41–56; the conflation of Harranians and Sabians is thoroughly analyzed and proven to be historically unfounded by Kevin van Bladel, in *The Arabic Hermes*.

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a ship or house, marriage, entering [the presence of] a sovereign, travel, sowing and planting, buying property, and what is similar to these things. As for the rest, God Almighty has safeguarded our brethren from doing them: I mean controlling emotions (*al-ʿuṭūf*), tying and binding, and similar things. We have explained these to our brethren in order to introduce the methods of those who practice them."[106]

To these reprehensible practices they add trickery by prestidigitation and necromancy. The former is too mundane and useless.[107] The latter, they assert, is real and serious, as demonstrated by Jesus. They warn their reader that "this type of magic spoils minds and ruins the souls fascinated by and approaching it. Our brethren must not, God aid them, turn to this art by way of comparison, reading books, or experimenting."[108]

4 Influence

The earliest evidence of the influence of the Ikhwān's 52b is found in *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, written in the 340s/950s by the Cordoban *ʿālim*, *bāṭinī* (esotericist), and occultist Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (293–353/906–964).[109] In their German translation of the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, Martin Plessner and Helmut Ritter highlight numerous elements taken from 52b and similar content: the talismans of the lunar mansions and one of the definitions of magic mentioned above, namely, "all words and actions that charm (v. *saḥara*) the minds, and submit souls with the intention to fascinate and submit [them], to be listened to, receive satisfaction, to be obeyed, and to be complied with."[110] They also recount conceptual parallels, such as the correspondences of body parts to parts of the macrocosm.[111] For now, it suffices to refer the reader to the Plessner/Ritter translation

106 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:444; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Köprülü 870, fol. 333^{r}.

107 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:387; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 560^{r}.

108 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:426.

109 Maribel Fierro, "Bāṭinism in al-Andalus. Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964), Author of the 'Rutbat al-Ḥakīm' and the 'Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm' (Picatrix)," *Studia Islamica* 84 (1996): 87–112; Godefroid de Callataÿ, "Magia in al-Andalus: *Rasāʾil Iḫwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* y *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* (Picatrix)," *Al-Qantara* 34, no. 2 (2013): 297–344; Godefroid de Callataÿ and Sébastien Moureau, "Towards the Critical Edition of the *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*: A Few Preliminary Observations," *Arabica* 62 (2015): 385–394, here 391.

110 Maslama al-Qurṭubī, *Picatrix: das Ziel des Weisen*, translated into German by Hellmut Ritter and Martin Plessner (London: Warburg Institute, 1962), lx–lxi; Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, IV: 314; Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 538^{r}.

111 Ritter and Plessner, *Picatrix*, lxi.

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for the textual parallels between the two texts. The *Ghāya* is the earliest evidence of the influence of 52b, rather than 52a, which supports the antiquity of the former.

Accepting the erroneous attribution of the *Ghāya* to the mathematician Maslama al-Majrītī (339–398/950–1007), Holmyard and Flügel perceive a connection with the *Rasā'il* based on statements made by the author himself in the *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*—the *Ghāya*'s alchemical sister text—the most significant of which is:

> And we have presented (*qaddamnā*) among [our] compositions on the mathematical sciences and philosophical secrets / books and epistles / fifty-one epistles /[112] in which we have assimilated (*istawʿabnā fīhā*) [knowledge] that no one among the people of our age has preceded us in assimilating. These epistles spread and prevailed among them, so they competed in investigating them and impelled the people of their times to [read] them without knowing who composed them (*allafa*) and where they were composed. The ingenious among them, when they strove to read them diligently due to liking them and enjoying their turn of phrases, realized that they are contemporary compositions, without knowing who composed them and where.[113]

Elsewhere in the *Rutba*, the author even presents his alchemical work as a substitute for the epistles.

> I insist, I wrote this book as a substitute for these *Epistles* in their totality. Please find here, therefore, as a compensation for you, a reflection on animals according to what the experts in the art of alchemy have described. You will appreciate what I have arrived at. Next I shall report on minerals and their causes, having left aside the discussion of plants, because it is found in a well known epistle from among these *Epistles* and because a philosopher does not require it, unless he wants to become a physician. Who wishes this—well, let him read it in the *Epistles*, God the Exalted willing.[114]

112 "Philosophical secrets," in Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye, 2794, fol. 141^{r}, and Nuruosmaniye, 3623, fol. 3^{r}; "fifty-one epistles," in Tehran, Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia, MS 463, fol. 5^{v}; "books and epistles," in Pakistan, Karachi University Library, MS 2159, 7.

113 Pakistan, Karachi University Library, MS 2159, 7.

114 Pakistan, Karachi University Library, MS 2159, 23.

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S.M. Stern mentions this in passing, without giving any weight to it in his discussion of the authorship of the *Rasā'il*.[115] On account of Maribel Fierro's compelling attribution of the *Ghāya* and *Rutba* to Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī rather than al-Majrītī the mathematician, the question of the connection between these two texts and the *Rasā'il* must be revisited, now that this is chronologically plausible. Fierro notes that the suggestion that al-Qurṭubi had made a new recension of the *Rasā'il* "should be taken into consideration."[116] This was taken up by Godefroid de Callataÿ and Sébastien Moureau in two recent articles. They demonstrate the reasons that a historical connection was made between Maslama al-Majrītī, as author of the *Ghāya*, and the *Rasā'il*, buttressed by the existence of some manuscripts that explicitly attribute their authorship to him.[117] They also show that this was especially true among the intellectuals of western Islamic regions, such as Ibn Sabʿīn (d. c. 667/1269).[118] They then reject the possibility that Maslama al-Qurṭubī is the author or one of the authors of the *Rasā'il*, basing their argument on their interpretation of the verb *qaddama* in the previous long quotation from the *Rutba* as meaning "made them known." Al-Qurṭubi thus merely introduced the *Rasā'il* to al-Andalus through a copy he brought from his eastern sojourn.[119]

It is, indeed, unlikely that al-Qurṭubī contributed to the composition of the *Rasā'il*. There is, however, another possibility, which is to see *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* as an elaboration on 52b, which employs various other sources to substantiate its arguments, such as the ps.-Aristotelian Hermetica, works attributed to Jābir ibn Ḥayyān and Ibn Waḥshiyya's *al-Filāḥa al-nabaṭiyya* ("The Nabatean agriculture"). As the above statement from the *Rutba* shows, al-Qurṭubī was eager to be seen as a member of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' whom he might have met in Iraq during his travels in the eastern regions or even as their representative in al-Andalus.[120] Although the verb *qaddama* can mean to "present" or "introduce," his use of the expression *waḍaʿnā hādhihi al-kutub* ("we composed these books") and writing that they are the *Rasā'il* "wherein we have assimilated (*istawʿabnā fīhā*) [knowledge] that no one

115 S.M. Stern, "New Information about the Authors of the 'Epistles of the Sincere Brethren'," *Islamic Studies* 3 (1964): 405–428, here 420.

116 Fierro, "Bāṭinism in al-Andalus," 106–108.

117 Godefroid de Callataÿ and Sébastien Moureau, "Again on Maslama ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and Ibn Khaldūn: New Evidence from Two Manuscripts of *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*," *Al-Qanṭara*, 37 (July–December 2016): 329–372, here 331–333.

118 De Callataÿ and Moureau, "Again on Maslama ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī," 336–337.

119 Godefroid de Callataÿ, "Magia en al-Andalus: *Rasa'il ijwan al-Safa'*, *Rutbat al-hakim* y *Gayat al-hakim* (*Picatrix*)," *Al-Qanṭara* 34, no. 2 (July–December, 2013), 297–344, here 319–320, 327–328; de Callataÿ and Moureau, "Again on Maslama Ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī," 333–336.

120 Fierro, "Bāṭinism in Al-Andalus," 106.

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among the people of our age have preceded us in assimilating" indicate at least a desire to seem to have been involved in the writing of the *Rasā'il*.[121]

In the *Rutba*, following the statement regarding it being a replacement of some or all epistles, al-Qurṭubī mentions the value of the other "craft" and "outcome"—that is magic—which is integrated into (*dākhila fī*) alchemy, "for whoever wants to advance into the one called alchemy, mastering the other is indispensable."[122] This suggests that the *Ghāya* is part of his declared objective of expanding themes that are found in the *Rasā'il*.

The *Ghāya* and 52b share the same worldview, in which everything is governed by a system of volitional causality in a Neoplatonically hypostatic universe. In both texts, the micro-macro links and resulting correspondences justify the potential for interacting with and manipulating the astral and terrestrial worlds. The *Ghāya*'s structure as a manual contrasts with 52b's irregularly sized chapters and random sequence of topics;[123] and the freedom with which al-Qurṭubī recommends aggressive magic in the *Ghāya*,[124] which accords with the *siḥr ḥarām* (illicit magic) that the Ikhwān describe as corrupt and dangerous. Nevertheless, we do find in 52b some references to destructive magic in the section on the talismans of the lunar mansions. For example, we are instructed to make "*nīranj*s for hostility, feuds, the separation of two people, lethal poisons, and all kinds of it [*nīranj*] that lead to feuds and harm" under the seventeenth mansion, known as *al-iklīl* and similarly under the twenty-first mansion, *al-balda*.[125] However, the Ikhwān assert that they "have explained these to our brethren to introduce the methods of those who practice them" rather than to recommend them.[126] The description of the lunar mansions in the *Ghāya* differs markedly from that found in 52b. 52b's list is similar to that found in *Kitāb al-Tabṣira fī ʿilm al-nujūm* ("The book of insights into the science of the stars") by al-Malik al-Ashraf (d. 695/1296).[127] It is possible that al-Malik's list was

121 Pakistan, Karachi University Library, MS 2159, 7.

122 Pakistan, Karachi University Library, MS 2159, 24.

123 Constant Hamès, "La Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm: son époque, sa postérité," in Boudet, Caiozzo, and Weill-Parot, *Images et magie*, 215–232, here 220–224.

124 Maslama al-Qurṭubī, *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm wa-aḥaqq al-natījatayn bi-l-taqdīm*, ed. Helmut Ritter (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1933), examples of aggressive talismans at 27 (destruction of a country, annihilation of enemies) and 31–32 (causing separation and animosity).

125 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:437, 439; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 574^{v}, fol. 575^{v}.

126 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:444; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Köprülü 870, fol. 333^{r}.

127 Daniel Martin Varisco, "The Magical Significance of the Lunar Stations in the Thirteenth-Century Yemeni *Kitāb al-Tabṣira fī ʿilm al-nujūm* of al-Malik al-Ashraf," in "Divination,

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derived from 52b, but it is more likely that the authors of both independently consulted the ps.-Aristotelian Hermetic source.

The influence of the *Rasā'il* is also discernible in texts attributed to the occultist Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. c. 622/1225). Jean-Charles Coulon points out several parallels in *Shams al-maʿārif wa-laṭā'if al-ʿawārif* ("The sun of knowledge and the secrets of gnosis")[128] that indicate knowledge of the *Rasā'il* as a whole, including a reference to their doctrine of revolutions. Coulon also mentions that the angelology of this text is derived from the *Rasā'il*.[129] None of these, however, point to the content of 52b but rather to other epistles, such as number 49, on the action of the spiritual principles (*rūḥāniyyīn*), and number 36, on cycles and revolutions.

Shams al-maʿārif's list of the lunar mansions nevertheless contains elements found only in 52b's list. The author reformulates this list to reflect his lettrist knowledge, according to which each mansion corresponds to a set of letters and divine names, all of which encapsulate the mansion's talismanic powers, including aggressive ones. As mentioned earlier, the ps.-Aristotelian Hermetic text known as *Kitāb al-Istūṭās* was a major source of magic for the lunar mansions.[130] It is the Ikhwān's direct source, as evinced by the similarities in detail. However, they introduce a specific expression in their version: "from this [lunar mansion], descends (*yanḥaṭṭu*) to this world a *rūḥāniyya*," and elsewhere a variation of this, which is not found in the *Kitāb al-Istūṭās* but is used in *Shams al-maʿārif*.[131] Other similarities of expression in this section indicate the author's use of 52b. The lunar-mansion list of the *Shams al-maʿārif* is taken from an original text by al-Būnī called *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* ("The secrets of signs"), which also contains these expressions and other similarities.[132]

The lunar mansions apparently constitute the nexus of 52b's influence. This is demonstrated also by a ninth/fifteenth-century manuscript in the Biblio-

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magie, pouvoirs au Yémen," ed. Anne Regourd, special issue of *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 13 (1995): 19–40.

128 This is a text incorrectly attributed to al-Būnī but which formed the basis of the eleventh/seventeenth-century al-Būnian compendium known as *Shams al-maʿārif al-kubrā* ("The sun of knowledge: the larger version") on which his wide fame mainly rests; see Noah Gardiner, "Esotericism in a Manuscript Culture: Aḥmad al-Būnī and His Readers through the Mamlūk Period" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2014), 6, 20, 27–30, 96, 102–103; Jean-Charles Coulon, "La magie islamique et le corpus bunianum au Moyen Âge" (PhD diss., Université Paris IV—Sorbonne, 2013), 1:80–84.

129 Coulon, *La magic islamique*, 1:718, 906, 906, 958.

130 Turkey, National Library of Manisa, MS 1461, fols. 18^{v}–25^{v}; Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:428–443; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 572^{r}–576^{r}.

131 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:429; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 572^{v}–573^{r}; Paris, BnF, Arabe 2647, fol. 13^{v}, fol. 15^{r}.

132 Paris, BnF, Arabe 2658, fols. 25^{v}–27^{r}.

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thèque Nationale de France (Arabe 2596) that contains an anonymous text titled *Anwār al-jawāhir wa-l-laʾāliʾ fī asrār manāzil al-maʿdan al-ʿālī* ("The glow of jewels and pearls over the secrets of the stations of the sublime metal"). Its unnamed author discusses the influence and magical applications of the lunar mansions from various sources, including al-Būnī and other lettrists (*asḥāb al-ḥurūf*), the ps.-Aristotelian Hermetica, and other authorities.[133] Although the text itself contains no reference to the Ikhwān, the compiler of the manuscript appends Epistle 52b in its entirety to the anonymous text, most likely to complement it with the Ikhwān's description.[134] A tantalizing reference to the *Rasāʾil* as a whole is found in *Kitāb Sharāsīm al-hindiyya* ("the book of *Sharāsīm* the Indian"), a magic text containing mostly practical instructions regarding suffumigations, fermentations (*taʿāfīn*), and concoctions, as well as a chapter on the names of planetary spirits and another on magical scripts.[135] At the end of the text (only in some manuscripts), a strange reference is made to the fifty-one epistles: "There are too many scripts (*aqlām*) to enumerate, and I have mentioned the scripts that were used by the people of knowledge to codify their books. People had used the script of the fifty-one introductions known as *The Epistles of the Brethren* that has appeared in this age and with it they wrote much."[136] It is not clear what this refers to, as there is no discussion of magical scripts in the *Rasāʾil*, and no manuscript written in code is known. The rest of the text contains nothing that indicates knowledge of 52b or the other epistles. It is notable that the text stresses the contemporaneousness of the *Rasāʾil*, an emphasis that we encountered above, made by al-Qurṭubī in the *Rutba*.

Another reader of the Ikhwān by whom we can gauge the influence of the epistle on magic is the Mamluk theologian Ibn Taymiyya (661–728/1263–1318). As Yahya Michot demonstrates, Ibn Taymiyya was acquainted with the *Rasāʾil*. He adopted Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's narrative on the identity of the Ikhwān and labeled them pejoratively as philosophers, esotericists (*bāṭinī*s), Qarāmiṭa, and Ismāʿīlīs. He criticized them for reconciling Divine Law and Greek philosophy. For him, their thought consists of "insipid crumbs of Pythagoras's

133 Paris, BnF, Arabe 2596, fols. 1^{r}–215^{v}. The scribe used an exemplar dated 19 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 867 (12 December 1462). The date of the completion is the day of ʿAshūrā of what appears to be the year 971(/1564) (fol. 215^{v}), but on the title page one reads that the manuscript came to be owned by a certain ʿUmar in 884 (/1479).

134 Paris, BnF, Arabe 2596, fols. 217^{r}–286^{v}.

135 Jean-Charles Coulon is preparing an edition of *Kitāb Sharāsīm al-hindiyya*. I am grateful for his guidance on this text. See his chapter in this volume.

136 Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Hamidiyi 189, fols. 193^{v}–194^{r}.

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philosophy."[137] Most interesting is his description of the Ikhwān as Aristotelian-Sabian philosophers. In *Bayān talbīs al-jahmiyya*, Ibn Taymiyya delineates the transmission of Greek knowledge into the Islamic domain, saying that it included the religion of the Sabians (central to which is the veneration of the planets) including "Aristotle and his kin" (*Arisṭū wa-dhawīh*) from whom the Ikhwān, as Qarāmiṭa, have taken their doctrines on the soul, intellect, light, and darkness.[138] This reference is reminiscent of 52a's introduction to the section on the Sabians and their rituals, which states that among the Greeks are the Sabians and Harranians, who base their doctrines on Babylonian and Egyptian knowledge as a result of "the transmission of arts and sciences." Their chief sages were Agathodaimon, Hermes, Ūmahris, and Aratus, from whom Pythagoreanism, Aristotelianism, Platonism, and Epicureanism branched out. After this introduction, the Ikhwān delve into the doctrine of soul.[139] Admittedly, this is not wholly conclusive evidence for Ibn Taymiyya's knowledge of 52a, as such associations were made by others, including al-Masʿūdī in *Murūj al-dhahab* ("The fields of gold").[140]

Other signs perhaps point to 52b in his works. Ibn Taymiyya's condemnation of the Ikhwān's equating the prophets' miracles with the feats of philosophers—and specifically their description of the former as a sort of soul-enabled power—is an indication of his possible knowledge of 52b, because it is there where they elaborate most on this. They do, however, also touch upon it elsewhere.[141] This inconclusive evidence of the influence of the fifty-second epistle (whether in the long or the short version) on Ibn Taymiyya is made even more equivocal in light of the fact that, in *al-Nubuwwāt* ("Prophecy"), he spends much effort and space to distinguish between prophecy and magic in a way that might be seen as a response to the Ikhwān's discourse on this matter in 52b. He does not cite them in this discussion, but, elsewhere in this work, they are briefly referred to as *bāṭinī*s and Ismāʿīlīs in an unrelated context.[142]

137 Yahya Michot, "Misled and Misleading … Yet Central in Their Influence: Ibn Taymiyya's Views on the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ," in el-Bizri, *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and their Rasāʾil: An Introduction*, 139–179, here 143–144, 140, 145, 149, 151; Nader el-Bizri, "Prologue," in el-Bizri, *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and their Rasāʾil: An Introduction*, 3–5.

138 Michot, "Misled and Misleading," 150–151; Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-jahmiyya*, 8 vols. (Munawwarah: Majmaʿ al-Malik Fahd, 1426/2005–2006) 2:473–474.

139 The Brethren of Purity, *On Magic I*, 44–45 (Arabic), 116–118 (English).

140 Abū l-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿ ādin al-jawāhir*, ed. Kamāl Marʿī, 4 vols. (Beirut 2005), 2:133.

141 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 2: 10; The Brethren of Purity, *On the Natural Sciences*, 19–23; Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 3:13.

142 Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Nubuwwat*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ṭweiān, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 2000), 1:403–405.

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Contrary to what one would expect, he does not seem to denounce them as mages or authors on *siḥr*.

The case is similar with Ibn Khaldūn (732–808/1332–1406), who dedicates long sections of his *Muqqadima* to defining, explicating, and denouncing the occult sciences: magic, the science of letters, astrology, alchemy, and divination. He even decries the author of the *Ghāya* and *Rutba* (whom he believes to be Maslama al-Majrītī) and Jābir b. Ḥayyān as arch-sorcerers of the West and East, respectively, adding al-Būnī and Ibn ʿArabī to the list of infamy.[143] Yet, the *Rasāʾil* are conspicuously absent from the entire work, especially as authors on magic.[144] De Callataÿ and Moureau argue for the impact of the Ikhwān on him, and, taking into account his knowledge of the *Ghāya* and *Rutba*, they suggest that Ibn Khaldūn followed other thinkers and considered Maslama al-Majrītī the author of the *Rasāʾil*; this implies that the denunciation of al-Majrītī is also a denunciation of the Ikhwān. After all, if Ibn Khaldūn did derive some of his ideas from the *Rasāʾil*, it would be counterintuitive to denounce them harshly by name, as he does with Maslama al-Majrītī and Jābir b. Ḥayyān. Nevertheless, this remains speculative, especially given that he speaks of al-Majrītī only as the author of the *Ghāya* and *Rutba*.

The intellectual influence of the *Rasāʾil* on the thought of Ibn Khaldūn is yet to be fully substantiated. Some propose that he derived his idea of the evolutionary potential of species, especially humans, from the Ikhwān, but he could have also been exposed to such ideas from others, such as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (597–672/1201–1274).[145] The fact that both the *Rasāʾil* and the *Muqaddima* refer to the science of letters has been used to forge a link between the texts, but the alphanumerical theory of the Ikhwān differs markedly from the Sufi-oriented *ʿilm al-ḥurūf* (science of letters), which began to develop and become systematized from the sixth/twelfth century. They have different epistemological foundations: the Ikhwān's is naturalistic and arrived at by intellection, while Ibn Khaldūn's is revelatory and downplays the intellect.[146]

143 Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, ed. Darwīsh Juwaidī (Beirut: al-Maktaba l-ʿAsriyya, 2000), 482–483, 485, 488.

144 As de Callataÿ and Moureau highlight, some literature overstated the influence of the *Rasāʾil* on the thought of Ibn Khaldūn. On their argument for the impact of the Brethren of Purity on him, see de Callataÿ and Moureau, "Again on Maslama," 338–341.

145 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, 3 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 2:423; de Callataÿ and Moureau, "Again on Maslama," 337–338; Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *The Nasirean Ethics*, trans. G.M. Wickens (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), 49–50, 78–79.

146 Saif, "From *Ġāyat al-ḥakīm* to *Šams al-maʿārif*," 316–317, 326–330; Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqqadima*, 488–490.

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There is nothing in the *Muqaddima* that shows Ibn Khaldūn's familiarity with the Ikhwān or any of its members as proponents of magic or sorcery. However, if he had at his disposal the shorter version (52a), he would have had no reason to denounce them as sorcerers or mages. As noted above, 52a contains no practical elements and is very "objective" in its tone. This might also be the reason that they were excluded from the anti-magic discourse of Ibn Taymiyya, who had perhaps likewise read only 52a.

The best candidates for demonstrating a deep influence of the Ikhwān's epistle on magic are the informally networked occultists and lettrists self-styled as the neo-Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', who were influential cultivators of the occult sciences in Timurid, Mamluk, and Ottoman domains. Among its best known members are Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Akhlāṭī (d. 799/1397); ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī (d. 858/1454), Ṣā'in al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (d. 835/1432), and Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī (d. 858/1454), in whose works al-Būnī's influence is detected. This association is probably due to "the Pythagorean and Neoplatonic philosophical orientation of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' or the shroud of anonymity which lent both authority and mystery to their *Rasā'il*."[147]

In addition to his erudition in the science of letters, al-Bisṭāmī was acquainted with ancient and medieval philosophy and occult sciences, as demonstrated by the list of sources he provides in his autobiographical account *Durrat tāj al-rasā'il* ("The crown jewel of the epistles") and *Shams al-āfāq fī ʿilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-awfāq* ("The sun of horizons on the science of letters and magic squares"). This list includes some ps.-Aristotelian Hermetica and *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, but not *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*.[148] Furthermore, his *Shams al-āfāq*

147 İlker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 8–15, es8, 104–113; Matthew Melvin-Kouski, "The New Brethren of Purity: Ibn Turka and the Renaissance of Neopythagoreanism in the Early Modern Persian Cosmopolis," in *Companion to the Reception of Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism*, ed. Irene Caiazzo and Constantin Macris, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); Cornell Fleischer, "Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences: Prophecies and the Ottoman Court in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries," *in Fal-nama: The Book of Omens*, ed. Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bağcı (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), 232–243; Gardiner, "Esotericism in a Manuscript Culture," 156–157, 322–325; Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Ṣā'in al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (1369–1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2012); and see Noah Gardiner's and Matthew Melvin-Koushki's chapters in this volume.

148 Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*, 105; London, British Library, Add MS 7494, fols. 4^{r}–6^{r}. This list is studied by Noah Gardiner, "The Occultist Encyclopedism of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 20 (2017): 3–38.

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reveals no conceptual parallels that could testify to their influence or that of the epistle on magic particularly. It contains a table on the lunar mansions, but it is clearly derived from al-Būnī, one of the major sources of this work, rather than 52b.[149] It seems that there is no real influence in these works of the epistle on magic specifically or the *Rasāʾil* generally.

This survey does not, of course, deal with all the readers of the *Rasāʾil*. It is impossible, so far, to speak of a deep and lasting impact of Epistle 52b or 52a, except on *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*. It is clear that Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī's work on magic was connected to 52b through borrowings and also by possibly being an expansion of 52b. The lack of mention of the Ikhwān in Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima* and in Ibn Taymiyya's works begins to show the insubstantial recognition of the Ikhwān as authors on magic. This could also mean that 52a is the version accessed by these intellectuals or that their knowledge of the *Rasāʾil* itself was not so intimate. With al-Būnī, the only indicator of reception is the lunar-mansions list, which seems to be taken from 52b, as attested by linguistic borrowings. As shown, no influence is detected in the works of al-Bisṭāmī, a member of the neo-Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ network.

5 Conclusion

This article sought to provide a thorough analysis of the Ikhwān's conceptualization of magic based on the longer version of their epistle on magic (52b). Unlike the shorter version (52a), its detailed content, esoteric layers, and personal tone is in better alignment with the rest of the *Rasāʾil*. Once this alignment has been established, it becomes clear how the layering of meaning the Ikhwān give to magic encapsulates their ideas on the enlightenment of the soul and the sublimation of leadership and state, the ultimate objective of the *Rasāʾil*.

To the Ikhwān, *siḥr* is essentially any act of transformation directed by will:

> And know, O brother (may God support you with a spirit from Him) that all actions, creations, crafts, professions, and all that takes place among people, giving and taking, buying and selling, talking and responding, disagreement in creeds, establishing proof and evidence, and anything that involves violating the norm and transforming essences, converting things from one thing to another, and mixing them with one another—all of this

149 London, British Library, Add MS 7494, fols. 87^{r}–89^{v}.

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> is magic (*siḥr*) and will. All the [the people in the] world depend on knowledge thereof, but everyone acts upon it according to their abilities.[150]

Cooking, making, transforming matter, minds, or souls, and medicine are all *siḥr*. According to the Ikhwān, one must not adhere to a single assumed definition or commit to one of the many that they give us. Instead, the reader must navigate a polysemous discourse that exercises the various faculties of the soul: sensory and intellectual. Perhaps the Ikhwān aim with this epistle, as with the rest of their encyclopedia, to hone the soul of the reader through the very act of reading, especially reading their *Rasā'il* and the subtle meanings in it, derived from an all-embracing attitude toward various sources of knowledge:

> And know, oh brother, that we do not oppose any science nor are we intolerant toward (*nataʿassab ʿalā*) any religious school (*madhhab*), nor do we cast aside any book among the books of the sages and philosophers, [containing] all sorts of knowledge that they have set down and authored and [containing] the subtleties of meaning that they had extracted with their intellects and scrutiny.[151]

One wonders if this dilution of the term "magic," which distances it from sorcery, has limited the impact of the epistle on Islamicate magical traditions or even stood in the way of recognizing the Ikhwān as authors on magic. The influence of 52b apparently occurred through the reception of *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* of Maslama al-Qurṭubī, who was keen to be known as one of the Ikhwān, as we see in his *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*. Despite being received enthusiastically in early modern Europe as the *Picatrix*, translated into Spanish and Latin in the second half of the seventh/thirteenth century, the *Ghāya*'s influence is difficult to discern in late medieval and early modern Islamicate occult thought. Nevertheless, it is not an exaggeration to say that it, like 52b, paved the way for later magical and even lettrist traditions by reworking the Neoplatonic worldview in a way that accommodates ideas of volitional causality, allowing for the incorporation of transitive and theurgic magical practices in the dynamics of the universe.

We have shown that the length and themes of 52b attest to its importance and intellectual weight in the *Rasā'il*. This is not surprising, given that the very identity of the Ikhwān is vested with magic. They write in 52b:

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150 Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fol. 546r; Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 4:340.

151 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, Epistle 48 (*Fī kayfiyat al-daʿwa ilā allāh*, "The Method of Calling to God"), 4:167.

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> We have called this epistle of ours "the epistle on magic and invocations" and revealed our discourse on what they are, the number of their divisions, and methods of their practice, in order for our loyal brethren to infer the hidden secrets when they investigate them with luminescent souls and virtuous talents, and [when] they become thoroughly occupied with examining them with deliberation and reflection, in order to need no one else for [obtaining] the necessities of life that they require. And if they reach this rank and attain this grade, it is appropriate for us to call them the Brethren of Purity. Know, O Brother, that the truth behind this name is the quality (*al-khāṣṣa*) that exists in those who are worthy of it, in reality and not by way of metaphor only.[152]

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152 Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, 4:411; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Atıf Efendi 1681, fols. 566^{v}–567^{r}.

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